

—the top of an iron bar driven into the ground—on which he had first seen it eleven days before. On the date mentioned a soberly-clad companion was in the vicinity.

The presence of this dry-country or Eyrean form as a resident on Rottneet Island, while being entirely absent as such from the adjacent coastal plain and jarrah belt of the mainland, coupled with its post-summer penetrations into these more humid areas from the lower hinterland, presents no little problem to the student of bird geography.

In the fruit-growing areas within the heavily forested country at Bickley, it is not uncommon for one or two of these robins to put in an appearance during the autumn or early winter. Here, for a few days, or weeks, or even months, they take up residence in some selected spot whence, when the time comes, they vanish as suddenly as they appeared.

This year a young bird, if the absence of a trace of red even on the cap indicates such, appeared at an unusually early date, namely, February 12. After a day or two it settled down in a brook-side corner of one of the orchards, and here, on March 12, it was seen to have acquired a companion, likewise in brown plumage, but having a tinge of red on the cap. The two birds were seen together about this spot to May 23, after which no check was kept on them.

—W. H. LOARING, "Wood St. Mars," Bickley.

Bowing Displays of Rufous Whistlers.—Some of the bowing displays of Rufous Whistlers (*Pachycephala rufiventris*) seen by E. H. Sedgwick (*W.A. Naturalist*, vol. 2, 1950, p. 120) may have been territory disputes, not courtship displays. Courtship usually follows a long sequence of behaviour usually consisting of begging and baby cries, whisper song and clever, erratic, chasing flights throughout the territory. Bowing is sometimes seen with the baby cries, and also occasionally during the early stages of the mad chasings, when a female is loth to begin. The male then seems to be trying to intimidate her into flight by bowing and whistling close to her. A harsh emotional whistle is her response. This may be the "unfamiliar note" of the hen observed on October 7, 1943 by Sedgwick.

Territory disputes are usually conducted at certain places on the boundary, often between two or three particular trees between which the disputing birds conduct a continuous shuttling flight, back and forth. They rock and bow at these stations with much excited whistling. The note for September 1, 1948, seems to be an example of this. The note about a single bird in display on April 18, 1948, is almost certainly about the initiation or close of a territory dispute, for courtship is not then in evidence and territory disputes are common in autumn.

A knowledge of the boundaries of the territories of the birds concerned helps to decide the meaning of whistlers' behaviour since courtship is conducted within a territory, while territorial disputes are usually held on the boundary.

There is one exception—when a very young bird in a strange territory ignores the boundary rule, or when a young bird is being driven out of its parents' territory. The resident male's chase of the young bird then resembles a courting flight, being erratic, conducted through a territory and eliciting from the young bird a harsh, emotional and awkward whistle similar to that which was quoted above for an harassed female. The key to this puzzle lies in the season. Young birds are chased thus in autumn and early winter. Females are courted thus in spring and summer.

—(Mrs.) RICA ERICKSON, "Fairlea," Bolgart.

Passage of Fork-tailed Swifts.—During mildly thundery conditions on the afternoon and evening of January 22, 1950, numbers of Fork-tailed Swifts (*Micropus pacificus*) came under notice at Bickley. These were first seen at about 3.30 p.m. when upwards of 30 were overhead. The birds were hawking at an altitude of 300 or 400 feet, and it was soon noticeable that they were moving away to the south. While we could still trace the flight of some of them in the distance, however, a fresh batch appeared from the north, and as these gradually moved away in the wake of the others, another lot took their place. With scarcely a break others followed along, 20 to 30 at a time, hawking far and wide, but maintaining a steady southerly drift. This went on until 4 p.m. when the passage ceased. We estimated that at least 300 birds passed over during this period. Further small detachments appeared between 6 and 7.30 p.m.

At 6.50 a.m. the following morning (January 23) Mr. George Parton, who had first drawn my attention to the birds on January 22, observed parties of swifts moving along to the southward above Kalamunda, his attention being attracted by their sharp note, which he described as rather resembling the "cheep" of a young chicken.

At much the same time on the morning of January 24 his notice was again drawn to the presence of swifts overhead by the combined noise created by the notes of many individuals. On this occasion he estimated that there were at least 500 birds, and from time to time a centre would form about which the whole flock would gather closely. Although they were at a very great height the sound of their notes came clearly down to him.

The birds were still overhead when he rode off to work on his cycle at 7.25 a.m., but when he reached his destination a few minutes later they were no longer to be seen.

—W. H. LOARING, Bickley.

Breeding Behaviour in Tree Martins stimulated by Weather Change.—In the *W.A. Naturalist*, vol. 1, 1948, p. 154, E. H. Sedgwick refers to the breeding of this species (*Hylochelidon nigricans*) under the verandah and roof eaves of the Hotel Morawa. A party of fifty or more birds has continued to nest at the hotel since this date. Owing to their habit of also roosting under the eaves, and the continuous accumulations of droppings, periodic unsuccessful attempts have been made to dislodge them.